

Public Charter Schools Grant Program

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UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES FOR SUB-GRANTEES

- **July 31, 2014**—Fourth Quarter Expenditure Report
- **September 2014—May 2015**—Sub-Grantee Monitoring Visits
- **October 31, 2014**—First Quarter Expenditure Report
- **January 31, 2015**—Second Quarter Expenditure Report
- **April 30, 2015**—Third Quarter Expenditure Report
- **April 30, 2015**—Annual Progress Report

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the PCSGP newsletter! In this issue, find information about upcoming grant and technical assistance opportunities, key program dates, and articles covering sub-grantee topics such as allowable costs and monitoring visits. Lighthouse Community Charter High School, a dissemination sub-grantee, shares the unique strategies they are using to increase student engagement and academic performance. If you have not accessed the Charter School Best Practices portal on Brokers of Expertise, see the article about this online community of practice for charter schools and charter school authorizers.

Published biannually, in the summer and winter, the PCSGP newsletter will communicate timely program information for grantees and prospective grantees, and highlight resources and promising practices for the charter school community at large. We welcome ideas for upcoming articles. Send your ideas and feedback on this first edition to: PCSGPgeneral@cde.ca.gov and include the term “PCSGP Newsletter” in the subject line.

Julie Russell

PCSGP GRANT BACKGROUND

The primary focus of the federal Public Charter Schools Grant Program (PCSGP) is to create charter schools that provide public school choice to students whose assigned traditional public school is chronically low performing. For 2010–15, PCSGP funds two types of grants: Planning and Implementation (P/I) and Dissemination grants. P/I grants are awarded for up to \$575,000 to plan and implement new charter schools. The grant provides startup and initial operating capital to establish high quality, high performing charter schools for California students and their families. The Dissemination grants provide funding to disseminate best practices likely to significantly improve pupil academic achievement. All applications are peer reviewed. The grants are competitive and are awarded to nonprofit entities and local educational agencies. The federal PCSGP grant program is administered by the Charter Schools Division. For more information:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/re/pcsgp.asp>

PCSGP Newsletters are posted on the CDE Web site at:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/re/pcsgp.asp>

2014–15 PCSGP GRANT RFA RELEASE

The Charter Schools Division of the California Department of Education is soliciting applications for its federal Public Charter Schools Grant Program (PCSGP). The planned release date of the 2014–15 Request for Applications (RFA) for Planning and Implementation (P/I) grants is **August 1, 2014**. P/I grants are for initial start-up and first year costs for new charter schools. Grants of up to \$575,000 will be awarded. The PCSGP application must align to the education plan, and the mission and vision described in the applicant's approved charter petition. The PCSGP is a supplemental grant that provides funding to charter operators. Important dates for those schools interested in applying for fiscal year 2014–15 grants are shown in the sidebar to the right.

Eligibility—A newly established or conversion charter school may apply for a P/I grant. If open, the school must not have been serving students for more than one school year at the time of application. An applicant must be a nonprofit entity or local educational agency. Non-profit status at the time of submission of the application will be verified with the California Secretary of State. Individuals and for-profit entities may not apply for P/I grants. An applicant may also be a developer with an approved charter petition from an authorized public chartering authority to operate a charter school. The applicant must have an approved charter from the district or county office of education where the school will be located, or from the State Board of Education before a grant may be approved for funding.

Grant Effective Dates—September 16, 2014 through June 30, 2015

Additional Information regarding planning/implementation grants can be found at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/as/>

Persistently lowest achieving school information:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/pl/>

General Program Information:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/re/pcsgp.asp>

If you have any questions regarding PCSGP Planning and Implementation grants contact the Charter Schools Division at 916-322-6029 or by e-mail at PCSGPgeneral@cde.ca.gov.

Key 2014–15 RFA Dates

August 1, 2014—P/I Grant RFA Release

August 8, 2014—Webinar: Overview of RFA

August 15, 2014—Webinar: PCSGP Budget Training

August 11–27, 2014—RFA Technical Assistance Sessions

September 16, 2014—Application Due Date

October 7–9, 2014—Application Peer Review

October 27, 2014—Notify Awardees of Peer Review Results

October 30, 2014—Webinar: Awardees Next Steps and Budget Process

May 7, 2015—Charter School Petitions Approved by the Authorizer

RFA Technical Assistance Sessions—Save the Date

August 11, 2014—San Diego

August 20, 2014—Riverside

August 25, 2014—Sacramento

August 27, 2014—Fresno

CHARTER SCHOOLS BEST PRACTICES PROJECT AT BROKERS OF EXPERTISE

Through the Imperial and Butte County Offices of Education, the Charter Schools Division created a Web-based community of practice focused on charter schools. The intent of the Brokers of Expertise (BoE) community group is to engage school districts, county offices of education, charter schools, and philanthropic organizations to help charter schools close achievement gaps and raise achievement levels for all students. Focused on teaching and learning resources developed and reviewed by practitioners, BoE supports student success in achieving state standards. As charter school resources become available, the BoE portal provides a robust platform for the sharing of products and materials developed by dissemination grant recipients and all charter schools statewide. The BoE site will also provide support to charter authorizers, charter leadership, and charter school practitioners. The project team is currently identifying charter school related online resources. Other activities include posting the previous 2007–10 dissemination sub-grant grant cycle materials. All charter school and local authorizer staff, working with charter schools, are encouraged to apply for a free account, to enable access to discussion groups and share resources with the charter schools community. Joining the BoE community is easy and just takes a few minutes. To join, select the "Charter Schools Best Practices Project" link at <http://www.myboe.org/>.



SHINING ITS LIGHT: LIGHTHOUSE COMMUNITY CHARTER HIGH

Lighthouse Community Charter High School (LCCHS), located in Oakland, is taking STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics – to a new level through the creation of the **Lighthouse Creativity Lab**, a hands-on innovative program of the **Lighthouse Maker Initiative** where students experience the power of making, design, iteration and the critical thinking skills developed through the making process.

Through its PCSGP charter school dissemination grant, LCCHS launched a multi-year, multi-school, multi-disciplinary project to increase the number of low-income students who understand the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the Common Core State Standards, are deeply engaged in their own education, prepared for college and careers in STEM fields, and equipped with skills and knowledge to solve complex problems. The prior three years' experience has equipped LCCHS to mentor other schools and develop additional support materials.

2013 Growth API = 799
99% non-white
24% English Learners
77% economically disadvantaged
2010 and 2011 Title I Academic Achievement Award
Hart Vision School of the Year 2013

RESOURCES

LCCHS:

www.lighthousecharter.org

Lighthouse Creativity Lab:

www.lighthousecreativitylab.org

Maker Education Initiative:

www.makered.org

Makerspace:

www.makerspace.com

Year 1 of the two-year grant brought two partner schools to the table for mentoring and a community of practice -- sister-school Lighthouse Community Charter School (K-8) and non-charter high school Life Academy of Health and Bioscience. LCCHS established a **Maker Space** open to students, teachers, and families five days a week, before, during and after school, and where students create. Year 2 will solidify their mentoring and community of practice, create a K-12 Make Curriculum Framework aligned to NGSS, and create teacher professional development modules. Two students were honored to participate in the White House Science Fair in May. LCCHS has made several presentations this year. Check the *Brokers of Expertise* website for presentation materials and documents shared by LCCHS.

AUTONOMY

Highly Autonomous is defined by the federal U. S. Department of Education for the PCSGP as having independence over governance, operations, staffing and financial decisions. The governance structure must be elected or appointed independently of the chartering authority and must operate as a non-profit entity. The governing board exerts majority control over the school's operations including: professional development, school year calendar, disciplinary policies and procedures, personnel decisions, and financial decisions. In addition, the chartering authority shall not be held liable for debts and obligations if it fulfills its legal oversight responsibilities. For more information on autonomy see: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/as/documents/autonomypowerpoint.pdf>

GOVERNANCE

All California charter schools must have a governance structure, including a process to ensure parental involvement. A reasonably comprehensive description of the governing board structure must be written into the school's charter petition. Charter school governance structures in California vary. Some resources to assist in understanding and developing a charter school's governance structure are listed below.

Charter schools may elect to operate as, or be operated by, a nonprofit public benefit corporation, formed and organized pursuant to the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law of the Corporations Code. In those instances, the charter authorizer has the option to have a representative on the corporation's board of directors. When a charter school is governed by a nonprofit public benefit corporation, the charter authorizer may not be liable for any debts incurred by the charter school if it has complied with all of its oversight responsibilities. Nonprofit public benefit corporations are subject to the California Corporations Code and complying with all charter school laws.

Resources:

National Charter School Resource Center: Board Governance 101

<http://www.charterschoolcenter/webinar/board-governance-101>

California Charter School Association (CCSA): Board and Governance

<http://www.calcharters.org/operating/board-governance/>

Charter School Development Center (CSDC): Tool Kits and Publications

<http://www.chartercenter.org/index/toolkits>

QUARTERLY EXPENDITURE REPORTS (QERs)

QERs are required before payments can be processed. QERs are due to the CDE no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter. Quarters are:

Q1—July 1—September 30
Q2—October 1—December 31
Q3—January 1—March 31
Q4—April 1—June 30

The QER form can be found at the following link:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/re/documents/pcsgpqer.xls>.

GRANT RECORDS

Per federal requirements, sub-grantees must maintain printed copies onsite of the following:

- Signed Grant Award Notification
- Signed approved application
- Approved budget
- Payments received and fund balance
- External review, if completed
- Teacher evaluation instrument, if required
- Board members' fiscal and governance training
- Inventory of items purchased with grant funds
- Budget reports, including quarterly expenditure reports, budget review revision forms, and annual progress reports
- RFA and signed general assurances and certifications, and other relevant materials referred to, but not included, within the RFA .

These records are accessed during monitoring visits and must be maintained onsite. All records are auditable and must be retained for five years following the grant closing date.

ALLOWABLE COSTS FOR PCSGP SUB-GRANTEES

A number of factors contribute towards whether or not an expense is allowable for PCSGP sub-grantees. Understanding these principles will aid in determining the eligibility of an expense. The factors are:

- Grant funds supplement, not supplant, state or local funds. Supplanting is the use of PCSGP funds to pay costs that would normally be paid using state or local funds, such as staff salaries and ongoing expenses or other ongoing operational costs of the school.
- Costs correlate to a grant objective or a Work Plan activity. The Work Plan proposes activities with measurable outcomes that will enhance the quality of the school. Examples of grant activities include informing the community about the school, and acquiring necessary equipment, educational materials, supplies, and curriculum.
- Costs are one-time in nature, not ongoing operational costs.
- Costs are obligated during the grant project period. Goods purchased or services rendered beyond the duration of the grant project period are not allowable costs.
- Purchases or contracts for goods or services follow pertinent procurement regulations. Procurement regulations ensure the appropriate use of federal funds, prevent conflicts of interest, and promote open competition between vendors offering similar goods and services. Most, if not all, purchases under the grant must comply with appropriate procurement regulations. Additional information on procurement is found in Appendix D of the 2013–14 PCSGP P/I RFA: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fq/fo/r1/pcsgp13rfa1.asp>
- All purchases are reasonable and necessary to complete grant activities or for initial start-up of the school. Goods and services should correlate to needs identified in the approved charter petition or the approved Work Plan in the grant application. Expenses will be questioned if they appear to be unreasonable, or not essential to the charter school or the completion of grant activities.

Contact a member of the PCSGP staff by phone at 916-322-6029, or by e-mail at PCSGPgeneral@cde.ca.gov, if you have questions about a specific expense that is not described above.

Other references:

Allowable Costs

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/as/csexpenses.asp>

California Indirect Cost Rates

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/fq/ac/ic/>

California School Accounting Manual (CSAM)

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/fq/ac/sa/>

Federal Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR)

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/edgarReg/edgar.pdf>

OMB Circular A-21 Cost Principles for Educational Institutions

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a021_2004/

OMB Circular A-87 Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Government

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a087_2004/

OMB Circular A-122 Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations

BUDGET REVISIONS

Once a sub-grantee budget is approved, budget changes among object codes must be pre-approved by CDE before expenditures are incurred or risk disallowed costs. Sub-grantees use a Budget/Program Revision Request Form to obtain pre-approval. The form is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/re/documents/pcsgpbrrf.doc> .



SUB-GRANTEE MONITORING

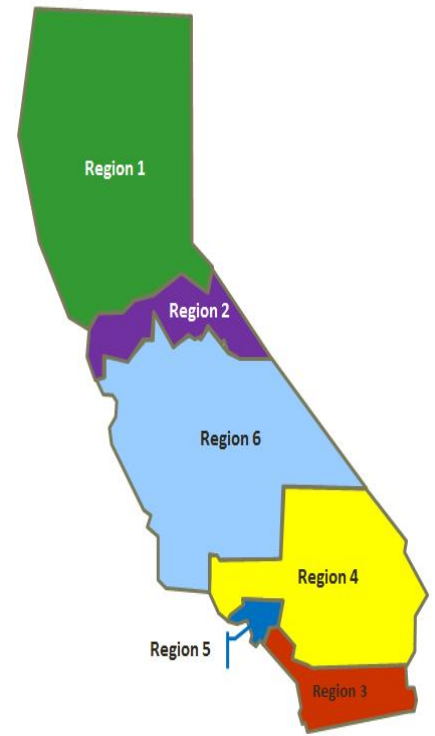
Monitoring Visit—Visits are intended to be positive, useful and an opportunity to share the innovative programs being implemented. A site visit is initiated by a PCSGP Team Consultant who contacts the school three to six weeks in advance to notify them of the upcoming site visit. The consultant arranges the visit with the PCSGP sub-grantee school contact by identifying a date when the site visit will be least disruptive to school instruction and operation. After a date is confirmed, the consultant formally notifies the school by letter, with a copy to the authorizer, announcing the upcoming site visit. The consultant ensures, through the charter contact, that all program reporting documents are current. A standard monitoring instrument identifies the evidence needed to satisfy monitoring requirements. Available local and state information about the school, posted on the school's website, is accessed. After reviewing the available information against the instrument, the consultant sends to the school's contact a list of any additional evidence needed prior to the visit. Interview questions are developed based on the information available and provided by the school. A schedule of activities on the day of the visit is developed collaboratively with the school contact. On the day of the site visit, the consultant tours the school, conducts classroom visits, and meets with representative groups from the governing board, teachers, operations team, and parents. A report of findings is drafted within a few weeks following the visit. If a corrective action plan is required, the consultant works with the school administrator to correct areas identified as needing improvement.

Preparing for the Visit—PCSGP sub-grantees should maintain all project documentation in a central file that is easily accessible by school staff assigned to the grant. Examples of evidence the consultant examines during monitoring visits include:

- An inventory of items purchased with the grant
- School policies and procedures
- Agreements and contracts
- Outreach and recruitment documentation, such as flyers and meeting sign-in sheets
- Required training receipts, slides, handouts

In addition to state Academic Performance Index (API) and federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports, all schools maintain other evidence of academic performance, including student benchmark reports, local aggregate data on academic performance, and any formative or summative assessment data to demonstrate student academic achievement.

Regional Assignments—The Charter Schools Division divides the state into six regions to ensure that all PCSGP sub-grantees are provided technical assistance, useful resources and on-going support. Each region is assigned a consultant that is responsible for the charter schools in his or her region. The consultant provides technical assistance to his or her assigned charter schools for the duration of the grant. The adjacent map and regional consultants are displayed to the right. For more information and a detailed map of the regions and consultant assignments: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cs/as/grantinfo.asp>



Meet the PCSGP Team

- Cindy Chan, *Fiscal Administrator*
- Robert Wilson **Region 1**
Education Programs Consultant
- Robert Wilson **Region 2**
Education Programs Consultant
- Sandi Ridge **Region 3**
Education Programs Consultant
- Jay Harris **Region 4**
Education Programs Consultant
- Jay Harris **Region 5**
Education Programs Consultant
- Colleen Quinn **Region 6**
Education Programs Consultant
- Thomas Pacheco
Analyst
- Tamie Thompson
Analyst

Contact a member of the PCSGP team at 916-322-6029 or by e-mail:

PCSGPGeneral@cde.ca.gov